

APPENDIX A

PROPOSED ACTION FOR GULKANA RIVER VISITOR MANAGEMENT, LOWER RIVER

LOWER RIVER: This is a 33 mile segment starting ½ mile below Sourdough campground and extending downstream to the confluence of the Gulkana and Copper rivers. The Lower River segment includes the shorelands and an upland corridor which is approximately 1 mile wide. This segment is not within the Wild & Scenic River corridor. Ahtna Native Corporation owns and manages the uplands adjacent to the river and the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) owns and manages the shorelands and waters. There are three Bureau of Land Management (BLM)-managed easements along this segment that provide access to the river from the Richardson Highway. In addition, the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOTPF) owns a large tract of land by the Richardson Highway Bridge.

Management intent: This Appendix includes the general management intent for this segment of the Gulkana River. More specific management intent for DNR's lands can be found in the Department of Natural Resource's draft Special Use Land designation for the Lower River. The Lower River segment will be managed to provide an undeveloped recreation experience, where one expects to meet other groups of users, and solitude is sometimes difficult to find, particularly during King season. Motorized uses are allowed on both the uplands, shorelands and waters. Traces of previous use are visible at many sites, although the shorelands are typically cleared of this evidence at least once each year by high-water events. Included in this river segment are three major access points; Richardson Highway Bridge, Sailor's Pit, and Poplar Grove. Sailor's Pit and Poplar Grove have both a 17(b) one-acre site easement and a 25-foot-wide trail easement. In addition, DOTPF manages the highway right-of-way and a large tract of land by the Richardson Highway Bridge. The areas adjacent to these sites will be managed for a social experience, where one expects to see other people most of the time, particularly during the King salmon season, and motorized use is expected.

The following proposed indicators, standards, management actions, and monitoring were developed cooperatively between BLM, Ahtna Native Corporation, and the State Department of Natural Resources. However, the Environmental Assessment does not analyze effects of implementing these actions on the Lower River. BLM has no authority on the lower river other than to manage the three 17(b) trail and site easements that access the river within this river segment. BLM will continue to cooperate with Ahtna Native Corporation and the State of Alaska to the extent possible on implementation and monitoring of indicators and management actions described below for the lower river and will continue to cooperate with Ahtna Native Corporation on management of the easements.

1. Issues, Indicators, Standards, Management Actions and Monitoring for the Lower River segment:

a. Litter

- *Indicator:* Percentage of sites where litter occurs. Sites are upland and gravel bar dispersed camp sites. Currently sites are not mapped.
- *Standard:* Less than 10% of sites have litter present.
- *Management Actions, Phase I:* Increase education. This would include informative kiosks at Sourdough and at the easements with additional information on Leave No-Trace camping. Kiosks and signs located at easements would include information on 17(b) easements and ownership of surrounding lands and land along the river.
- *Management Actions, Phase II:* Patrols. One clean up "patrol" per year would float the Lower River and provide clean-up of sites. Patrol would be cooperative effort between Ahtna, BLM, the State and user groups including outfitter/guides and non-commercial users.
- *Monitoring:* Monitoring would be conducted annually by the clean-up patrol, tallying number of sites along Lower River with litter present. Management actions will be phased in if the standard is exceeded for one year.

b. Human Waste

- *Indicator:* Percentage of sites where human waste or associated tissue paper occurs.
- *Standard:* Less than 10% of sites have human waste present.

- *Management Actions, Phase I:* See education efforts described under Phase I actions for the “Litter” issue above. In addition, lower river float and motorized guides would be required to carry portable toilets or other human waste carry-out systems. A waste disposal and cleaning station should be constructed at the new Richardson Bridge facility. Other users on the river will be encouraged to pack out human waste by example and by education. Porta-potties at Poplar Grove and Sailor’s Pit will be maintained. The proposed facility at Richardson Bridge should include vault toilets.
- *Management Actions, Phase II:* All users will be required to pack out human waste. All outhouses mentioned above will be maintained.
- *Monitoring:* Monitoring would be conducted annually by clean-up patrol, tallying number of sites along the lower river with human waste present. Management actions will be phased in if standard is exceeded for one year.

c. Fire rings

- *Indicator:* Number of fire rings per site.
- *Standard:* No sites with more than one fire ring.
- *Management Action, Phase I:* More education, as described under “Human Waste” and “Litter” issues above. Annual patrol would dismantle all but one fire ring per site. Encourage use of portable fire pans if a fire is used. On Ahtna land, allow use of only dead and down wood. This is currently the regulation on all state lands in the area.
- *Management Action, Phase II:* Require all campers on upland sites to use fire pans.
- *Monitoring:* Annual patrol will tally number of sites visited with greater than one fire ring. Management actions will be phased in if standard is exceeded for two consecutive years.

d. Site impacts

- Indicators, Standards, and Management Actions for this issue will be the same as described for the Upper River segment. There are currently no heavy impact sites on this river segment. Monitoring and management actions described (rehabilitation or closures) would need to be carried out by Ahtna Native Corporation personnel or a cooperative user group of volunteers, or a combination of both. Ahtna should develop site-specific plans for their lands located adjacent to Sailor’s Pit and Poplar Grove. DOTPF should develop site-specific plans to manage recreation uses adjacent to the Richardson Highway Bridge. This may include a land trade or land acquisition for a site suitable to support a campground and other visitor facilities. Until then, dumpsters and portable toilets should be installed and maintained during the high-use season.

e. Camp encounters (during king season, 6/1 – 7/20)

- *Indicator:* Percent of nights on river within sight or sound of other campers.
- *Standard:* Less than 30% of nights.
- *Management Actions, Phase I:* A voluntary registration system would be implemented for Lower River overnight float or motorized trips. This system would be similar to that described in the proposed action for the Upper River. BLM’s website for the registration system would include Lower River information and registration. In addition, a campsite map would be produced and would be made available for river users. This would enable users to determine where campsites are and avoid camp encounters and camp sharing. Ahtna Native Corporation would need to produce the maps. See the draft SULD for proposed restrictions on chainsaws and use of weapons on this river segment.
- *Management Actions, Phase II:* Implement permit system for overnight downstream launches from Sourdough. Permits per day would be based on number of campsites within first days float. Permits would need to be administered by Ahtna Native Corporation, but could utilize BLM scheduling system website and registration already in place.
- *Monitoring:* Monitoring would be conducted through on-river questionnaires available at launch sites and at Sourdough boat launch. Questionnaires would clearly define and tally camp encounters for users, which could then be expressed as a percentage. These values would be averaged over two seasons if necessary to obtain a larger sample size. Management actions will be phased in based on two consecutive years of non-compliance with standard.
- *Note:* These standards do not apply for camping at Poplar Grove, Sailors Pit, or the proposed Richardson Bridge facility. These areas will be managed for a social recreation experience. The BLM easements at

Poplar Grove and Sailor's Pit will be maintained as 25' 17(b) easements, with one-acre sites at the end of each easement. Camping outside the easements would occur on Ahtna Native Corporation land and would be managed by Ahtna. Ahtna also controls powerboat access to the river at the Sailor's Pit site.

f. Camp encounters (after king season)

- *Indicator:* Percent of nights on river within sight or sound of other campers.
- *Standard:* Less than 10% of nights.
- *Management Actions, Phase I:* Same as described above for king season.
- *Management Actions, Phase II:* Same as described above for king season.

g. Powerboat encounters

- With the exception of the prohibition of personal watercraft, there are no additional restrictions on the use of powerboats on the Lower River segment.

h. Fishing competition and limits on guides

- Develop standards based on methods and discussed under this issue for the **Sourdough** segment. Should be a cooperative effort between Ahtna, State of Alaska (DNR and ADF&G), outfitter/guides, non-commercial fishermen, and BLM.
- Initial Management Action: Work cooperatively with the State and stakeholders (both commercial and non-commercial) to develop standards that measure trip satisfaction for commercial and non-commercial anglers. Subsequent management actions targeted at limiting guided activities on the river would be based on monitoring showing non-compliance with standards. Monitoring and data collection to begin once standards are developed.